

Where Capital Drives Change

Frequently Asked Questions

Season 2 · 2026

This document answers the most common questions from Rotary Clubs and NGOs applying to Whale Tank 2026. Please read it in full before submitting your application.

Important Disclaimer: Whale Tank is a platform — not a funding body. The organising committee connects Rotary Club-sponsored projects with Whale Partners. We do not guarantee, underwrite, or commit funding for any project. A project may receive full funding, partial funding, co-funding from multiple Whale Partners, or no funding. Funding decisions rest solely with Whale Partners. The organiser may at their discretion notify changes to format as per the requirements of the event or Whales.

GENERAL

Q1. What is Whale Tank?

Whale Tank is a live funding platform — Rotary's answer to Shark Tank, built entirely for social good. Rotary Clubs, co-presenting with their NGO partners, pitch to serious philanthropic funders (Whale Partners) at a Grand Finale event. Whale Partners choose which projects to fund — directly. No pooling. No committee. One night.

Q2. Who can apply?

Rotary Clubs with an NGO partner. The Rotary Club must co-apply and actively sponsor the project. Applications from NGOs without a sponsoring Rotary Club will not be accepted. The Rotary Club and the NGO are jointly responsible for the application and, if funded, for execution and reporting.

Q3. When do applications open and close?

Applications open June 1, 2026 and close June 30, 2026. No extensions will be granted.

Q4. Are Lightning Pitch and Tide Breakers open?

Not yet. Lightning Pitch and Tide Breakers — smaller funding rounds — will be launched separately. Watch the website for announcements.

ELIGIBILITY

Q5. Does the NGO need to be registered?

Yes. The NGO must be a registered Trust, Society, or Section 8 Company with valid registration documents and audited financials. Unregistered entities are not eligible.

Q6. Our club wants to apply for 2 projects. Is that allowed?

Yes. Each Rotary Club may submit a maximum of 2 project applications per season. Both must be submitted independently, each with a separate ₹5,000 application fee.

Q7. Can the same NGO appear in applications from two different Rotary Clubs?

No. Each NGO may appear in only one application.

Q8. What is the minimum and maximum funding ask?

The minimum ask is ₹10 Lakh. There is no upper limit — however, the amount requested must be credible and proportionate to the project scope, budget, and execution capacity.

FUNDING & MONEY**Q9. Is funding guaranteed if we are selected for the Grand Finale?**

No. Selection for the Grand Finale means your project is shortlisted and gets to pitch. Funding decisions are made solely by Whale Partners at the event. A project may receive full funding, partial funding, co-funding from multiple Whale Partners, or no funding. The Whale Tank organising committee does not underwrite or guarantee any project.

Q10. What does co-funding mean?

Two or more Whale Partners may jointly fund a single project. For example, one Whale funds ₹10L and another funds ₹15L to meet a ₹25L ask. This is agreed between the Whales on the night of the event.

Q11. What if a Whale offers less than we asked for?

You may accept a partial pledge. There is no obligation on either side. The organising committee facilitates but does not make funding decisions.

Q12. When does money reach the NGO?

Pledges are made at the Grand Finale. An MOU is signed within 2 weeks. Fund transfer timelines are agreed directly between the Rotary Club–NGO and the Whale Partner. Whale Tank facilitates but is not a financial intermediary.

Q13. Does Whale Tank take any cut of the funding?

No. 100% of all pledged funds go directly from the Whale Partner to the project. Whale Tank charges no commission or overhead on project funding.

APPLICATION FEE**Q14. Why is there a ₹5,000 application fee?**

The fee covers administrative costs of running Whale Tank — jury review, screening sessions, coaching, venue, and event production. It ensures only serious applications are submitted.

Q15. Is the fee refundable?

No. The ₹5,000 application fee (inclusive of GST, Composite Scheme) is strictly non-refundable, regardless of whether the application is shortlisted, selected, or funded.

Q16. How do we pay the fee?

Scan the QR code displayed at Step 7 of the application form (UPI ID: rotarysobo@kotak, Kotak Mahindra Bank). Pay exactly ₹5,000 and note the transaction ID / UTR. Upload a screenshot of the payment confirmation at Step 7. Applications without payment proof will not be processed.

Q17. Will an invoice be issued?

Yes, on request. An invoice will be issued by Rotary Club of Mumbai SOBO. This is why the sponsoring Rotary Club's PAN number is collected during the application.

Q18. If our club applies for 2 projects, do we pay ₹5,000 twice?

Yes. The fee is per project application — ₹5,000 per submission.

PROCESS**Q19. What happens after we submit?**

Step 1: Application reviewed by the Whale Tank jury (2–3 weeks). Step 2: Shortlisted projects invited to the Whale Pond round — a brief virtual presentation on Zoom. Step 3: 10–15 projects selected for the Grand Finale. Step 4: Coaching session provided before the Finale. Step 5: Grand Finale — live pitch to Whale Partners. Pledges made on the night.

Q20. What is the Whale Pond round?

An intermediate screening round where 25–30 shortlisted projects each present briefly on Zoom. The jury selects 10–15 projects for the Grand Finale.

Q21. Will we receive feedback if not selected?

We will endeavour to provide brief feedback to projects not shortlisted. This is not guaranteed given the volume of applications.

Q22. When is the Grand Finale?

Tentatively August 23, 2026 — subject to the schedule of Whale Partners. The final date will be confirmed in late July or early August 2026.

Q23. Does our team need to be present in person at the Grand Finale?

Yes. A representative of the sponsoring Rotary Club and/or the NGO must present in person. Remote pitches are not permitted.

THE PITCH**Q24. How long is the pitch at the Grand Finale?**

30 minutes per project — approximately 15 minutes of presentation followed by 15 minutes of Q&A; with Whale Partners.

Q25. Who pitches — the NGO or the Rotary Club?

Both are encouraged to be present and present together. A team of up to 3 people may pitch. The Rotary Club's presence signals accountability and commitment to Whale Partners.

Q26. Do we need a pitch deck?

Yes. A PDF pitch deck (max 15MB) must be submitted with the application. This is also the deck used at the Grand Finale.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Q27. What are we committing to if we receive funding?

The sponsoring Rotary Club and NGO jointly commit to: (a) using funds solely for the approved project; (b) submitting quarterly progress and utilisation reports to the Whale Partner and Whale Tank; (c) providing invoices, photographs, and impact data on request; (d) communicating any major changes in project scope in writing to both the Whale Partner and Whale Tank.

Q28. What if the project doesn't go as planned?

Communicate proactively. Any material deviation in scope or budget must be communicated in writing. Misrepresentation or misuse of funds may result in discontinuation of funding.

DISCLAIMER

Q29. What exactly is Whale Tank's role?

Whale Tank is a platform — we curate, screen, coach, and connect. We are not a donor, not a grant-making body, and not a financial guarantor. We bring vetted Rotary Club-sponsored projects and serious funders into the same room. Funding decisions are made solely between Whale Partners and the projects they choose to back. The organising committee does not take responsibility for ensuring any project receives funding. The organiser may at their discretion notify changes to format as per the requirements of the event or Whale Partners.

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